

Workplace Violence Policy for City Employees

Lynchburg City Council Work Session January 29, 2002

Comments by Councilman Joseph M. Seiffert

We are discussing a change in the policy today because the current policy was adopted administratively – by the former city manager – WITHOUT THE APPROVAL (or knowledge) of the city council at that time. That policy forbids any city employee, at any time, from having a weapon on any city property. The only exception is for police officers.

Upon taking office in July 2000, my attention was directed to the policy by city employees who, having complied with the numerous parts of section 18.2-308 of the Code of Virginia relating to concealed carry permits, were denied their rights under the Constitution of the U.S. and the laws of the Commonwealth to defend themselves with personal protection weapons with this policy.

In addition, employees wishing to exercise the same rights as other citizens outside of normal working hours, such as walking on the trails or other city property is forbidden to carry their weapon with their permit.

There was also no provision for persons being stalked from having a weapon, with a permit, as protection. Further, employees who have plans to go hunting after work could not even have a weapon in their vehicle trunk while parked on city property. It further strips away the ability of an employee from defending him/herself if someone...either an employee...or a citizen...tries to do harm in any city workplace.

Such prohibitions do NOTHING to ensure the safety of anyone. It is a false sense of security simply because do we really believe that a person, employee or other, is going to obey a rule like this if they want to do others harm? Let me say that Moses came down off the mountain with the Ten Commandments from God....and people sin every day! The criminal codes are loaded with statutes directed at crime...and our jails are filled up. No, rules such as this are “feel good””OH, look we have a policy in place...that will make everything safe.”

Just 1-1/2 weeks ago, in Grundy, a law student went on a rampage. He killed the dean and two others...and wounded three others. He was stopped by an off duty North Carolina deputy sheriff who ran to his car, got his firearm, and confronted the suspect. When he aimed his revolver, the cowardly suspect gave up. The point I make here is that those who would do such a thing must be given pause to think that law-abiding people just may have the means to defend themselves. Such is deterrence.

I agree with the city manager. Option 2 is to the point, but option 4, by implication, would allow lawfully carried weapons on city property. It also addresses the real meat of the policy by prohibiting specific behaviors. It adds the words "“Using, threatening to use, or displaying” to the sentence about a weapon of any kind, or any other object that is used for the purpose of injury or intimidation..... That is the proper policy, in my opinion. And we restore the rights our employees should enjoy, under the law, because they are citizens also.

When I was sworn in on June 22, 2000, I swore “ that I will support the Constitution of the United States, AND the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia...”

That is what option 4 will do.

End of statement